

What I wish I knew in law school...

Law school can be a steep learning curve, and stepping into the world of practice can seem even more daunting. One of the most common complaints I hear from recent graduates is that they feel under-prepared to deal with the day-to-day realities of practice that they are confronting as articling students or recent calls.

While there may never be a substitute for hands-on learning, here are a few lessons my colleagues and I wish we had learned in law school to make the transition into the world of 'lawyering' easier.



From left to right are Victoria Margolin, hired by LAWPRO after her articles here; Joseph Juda, hired after articling and soon to go into private practice with a Toronto law firm; and current articling students May El-Abdallah and Ayla Kim.

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This article originally appeared in LAWPRO Magazine, Student Issue #1, 2012.
It is available at www.practicepro.ca/education/newlawyers.



Courses that teach practical skills really do make a difference

That legal writing class might just turn out to be the most important course you'll take in law school. Writing academic articles on complex legal topics won't necessarily prepare you for the days when you'll need to draft a factum in a succinct and straightforward manner. Drafting is an art. It's worth taking the time to hone the skill before entering practice. The same goes for advanced research techniques.



Ask questions & seek a support system

Your time as a student is the perfect time to be asking as many questions as possible of professors, principals, peers, and others. After all, you are there to learn. Don't pass up an opportunity to discover something new out of fear or embarrassment. Many people take pride in being able to pass on the knowledge they've earned and will be happy to help you out. They might even tell you a funny story or two about their first time in court.

Know where to go for help



After three years of law school, I found myself with a degree in my hand, but with the same sense of bewilderment about court procedures as I did on day one of law school. Luckily, there are resources out there that help fill the gap. The Law Society of Upper Canada provides how-to guides for topics ranging from administrative law to wills and estates. Many professional organizations, such as the Advocates Society, also provide resources for members. The practicePRO website provides useful precedents, such as retainers and statements of account.

Pay attention to the process

Whether you are volunteering at a legal clinic or preparing for a moot, get in the habit of documenting your steps. Not only will this make you familiar with the processes, it will provide useful training in documenting files. Keeping a well-maintained record will be very useful in avoiding administrative errors such as missed filing dates and in refreshing your memory when meeting with a client.



May El-Abdallah is an articling student at LAWPRO. This article was prepared with assistance from Ayla Kim, Victoria Margolin, and Joseph Juda.



plug in

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We at LAWPRO hope you enjoyed this inaugural issue of the Student Edition of *LAWPRO Magazine*.

Did you know that *LAWPRO Magazine* is published four times a year? Each issue contains practical information that can help you establish a well-managed practice and avoid claims.

If you'd like to subscribe (it's FREE for law students and articling students!) send a request to communications@lawpro.ca.

Remember – practicePRO has a web page devoted specifically to the concerns of lawyers new to practice. You can find it at: practicepro.ca/education/newlawyers.

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, we'd love to hear from you.
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